



ELSAH HISTORY

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Historic Preservation through the Eyes of Former Mayor and HEF Board Member Jane Pfeifer

Cecily Lee conducted this interview on September 14, 2021, at Jane Pfeifer's home in Elsah, where she and husband David Pfeifer have lived for 43 years.

CL: What do you see as Historic Elsah Foundation's (HEF's) prime achievements during its first 50 years?

JP: When Historic Elsah Foundation was formed in 1971, the concept of historic preservation was a new idea for Elsah. HEF advocated for preserving the Village's built environment and local history. While interest in nation-wide historic preservation may be less than it was in the 1970s, HEF's goal remains to advocate for Elsah, its past and its future. HEF helped save various Elsah buildings at critical points and brought local history alive for both the community and the larger public; that is an achievement. We need to continue to remember our past goals and evaluate if we are doing what's right for today.

CL: What did HEF look like in the early years?

JP: All the founding members of Historic Elsah Foundation loved Elsah and were remarkable people with great foresight. HEF sparked interest among residents in the concept of



Jane Pfeifer, 2021. Courtesy of Carolyn Schlueter.

historic preservation and renewed appreciation of Elsah's own local history. They also took concrete action to save and restore historic buildings. By researching and documenting the history of Elsah and its buildings and working with Village residents, they facilitated the Village of Elsah applying for and being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. and Paul O. Williams wrote *Elsah: A Historic Guidebook* including updates for all five editions. HEF published

Elsah History newsletters that included research on Elsah history and activities. HEF raised funds for restoration of the Village Hall and later, the Mott Building. They involved Principia College students in local research and archeology, including on the Native American presence.

National Register of Historic Places

“The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.”

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>

From my perspective, three individuals were especially important to understanding the early development of Historic Elsah Foundation. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. (Chuck) was HEF's first President. He was a distinguished academic and authority on the history of preservation. He was a master of the use of interviews with national preservation leaders. His papers, including his interviews, are held at the University of Maryland. His seminal works, *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949* and *The Presence of the Past*, are still used in historic preservation courses.

I don't think many in the Village even knew they had such an expert in their midst! However, Chuck's engaging storytelling was highly effective in creating enthusiasm for recording

Elsah's history and the built environment.

Paul O. Williams (Paul) was HEF's Vice President and editor of the newsletter. He was a well-respected academic with his professional writing success including published Haiku poetry. He was an expert on Henry David Thoreau and president of the Thoreau Society.

Inge Mack was one of the HEF directors. She later served as HEF President and editor of the newsletter. While she was not credentialed in the same way as Chuck and Paul, she was a woman of great experience, an intellectual, and a wonderful asset to the organization.

While I am mentioning specifically these three people, many others joined in and made their important individual contributions.

CL: What buildings has Historic Elsah Foundation been involved in restoring?

JP: The goal of HEF is, of course, to preserve buildings. The Village Hall was the first restoration. HEF leased the building from the Village for a dollar a year in exchange for restoring it. (See *Elsah History* #7, Jan. 1974.)

The first building HEF purchased was the Mott building on LaSalle Street. After HEF purchased the building, Al and Inge Mack and Dorothy Lindgren leased it to start a very successful restaurant called The Elsah Landing Restaurant. It was later sold to Helen Crafton and Dorothy Lindgren. After twenty years as owner, HEF felt the best next step for the building was for it to be sold to a private individual.

In 1996, HEF sold the building to Ann Badesch (and Mark Badesch) who owned a successful restaurant, My Just Desserts, in Alton. Selling an historic building is a way to preserve it, in part by including preservation conditions in the

sale. A few years ago, the Village bought the Mott building with the goal of finding someone interested in running a restaurant in the Village, harking back to success of The Elsah Landing Restaurant.

After the 1993 Flood, Historic Elsah Foundation bought Farley Music Hall from owners Gerald and Patricia Taetz. The 1993 Flood damaged the building. In addition to flood damage, the building was seriously leaning and had to be straightened. HEF was able to get a grant from the Illinois State Historic Preservation Agency



Carolyn Schlueter & Jane Pfeifer, 4/2/2022. Courtesy of Carolyn Schlueter. Visit: <http://senioramerica.org/>

to help with the restoration. HEF also had many generous donations and fundraising activities to pay for the purchase and repairs.

Part of the stabilization was the construction of an interior wall that you see as you come in. Reinforcements were also installed at the corners, a custom cut wood floor (first floor) on new concrete slab was installed, and the damaged first floor windows were replaced with traditionally built windows. Jack Luer was the architect for this work. HEF made Farley Music

Hall a much stronger building. It's amazing to still use an old wooden structure (1880s), built by local workmen without the modern building standards. (See Elsah History #90, Autumn 2005.)

CL: Has Elsah lost historic buildings?

JP: Yes, we've had a lot of losses over the years. Fire caused the relatively recent loss of three buildings: 1) the Union Hotel on LaSalle and Selma, a wooden building, 2) a house on Penn Street and 3) the Catherine Cresswell House on Valley Street. And there was a little cottage behind the Christian Science church that was demolished because of its condition. Also, the 1993 Flood caused additional loss of several buildings and the loss of the Gate Lodge building as a residence.

CL: Has HEF interfaced with other preservation entities?

JP: As an expert, Hosmer served on the first Illinois Historic Site Advisory Council. Williams served on it following Hosmer. Years later, I was appointed to be on the Council, as an Advocate. Council appointments are made by the Illinois Governor.

Hosmer worked through the lengthy application process to get the Village of Elsah listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He also succeeded in getting Principia College, part of whose campus lies within the Historic District, designated as a National Historic Landmark. This designation recognized the architecture of Bernard R. Maybeck, architect.

CL: Can you describe your involvement with Historic Elsah Foundation?

JP: I became an HEF member when we moved to Elsah in 1974. It wasn't until 2008, when

Marie Oleson was president, that I joined the board and served through 2021. My tasks included representing HEF on the Village Museum Committee (the Museum is jointly run with the Village government), editing a few issues of *Elsah History*, participating in the current revising of *Elsah: A Historic Guidebook*, organizing the Village of Elsah Museum's annual Photography Exhibit, and facilitating donations of historical artifacts, photos and files for use in the Museum.

CL: You were Mayor of Elsah from 1984 to 2001. Were there opportunities for you to support historic preservation in that capacity?

JP: During the Great Flood of 1993, the Village mobilized to do extensive sandbagging to protect our historic buildings and homes. After



the flood, we sought available state grants for restoration from flood damage. With Jack Luer's assistance, we facilitated 13 homeowners in successfully processing their grant applications.

In the 1980s, Historic Elsah Foundation offered to pay for an outside expert on zoning ordinances. On the recommendation of state and local preservationists, Richard J. Roddewig (an attorney from Chicago who specialized in historic preservation ordinances) was hired. He interviewed villagers and make recommendations of revisions of our zoning ordinances. The Village then held public meetings with our own Village attorney drafting the revisions from both the public comments and Roddewig recommendations. The Village wanted to be open and transparent, get input, and have a professional, accurate description of what we should be doing. HEF encouraged this action and paid the fee for Roddewig's consulting.

While I was mayor, I served a term on the Illinois State Historic Site Advisory Council. That experience gave me a broader perspective on Elsah's preservation efforts. My interactions with state officials and preservation professionals allowed me to share that knowledge with the community. It also allowed me to share our community needs with the state officials.

CL: You probably know HEF's collection of papers, photos and artifacts better than anyone. Please tell us about it.

JP: I am not the person keeping the records, but I have been here a relatively long time. HEF has objects, documents and photographs that have been given to HEF (sometimes with the specific designation to be used in the Museum). The Museum's collections include items for Museum display that were donated either to the

Village of Elsau or Historic Elsau Foundation. Museum storage is very limited. So, the Museum cannot accept all donations that are offered. The Museum has an inventory, but it needs an update with a better description of each item.

An example of the complications of handling donations is one we received from Judy and Glenn Felch. It was a large wardrobe attributed to the McNair family (made by or maybe just owned by the family). It is a wonderful piece that certainly belongs in Elsau. To move it into the Museum, as the owner of the wardrobe, HEF had to pay to have it taken apart and put back together. Happily, it has also been a benefit to the Museum with its added storage space.

As for photographs, the Village office in the Civic Center has photographs in their files which the public can view by request. HEF also has photos (most are copies of historic images, but sometimes original historic photographs). Unfortunately, our storage locations are not ideal.

Some of HEF's photographs have been used in the Museum "Elsah Architecture" exhibit. This exhibit was curated by Glenn Felch. One of the Museum Committee's early projects with donation money was installing archival mats and UV filtering glass to cover each photo in the architecture exhibit.

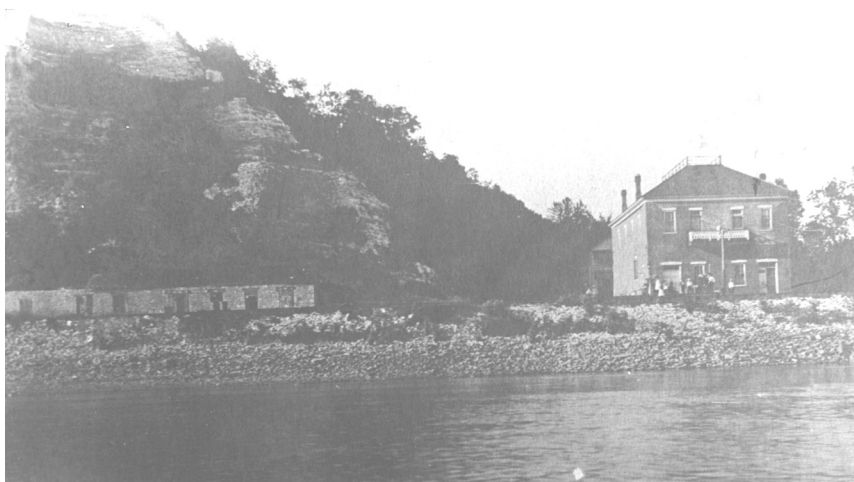
Since HEF does not have a regular office or some paid staff, HEF Board members have kept files in their homes. Some files are in Farley Music Hall. Interviews of residents are preserved directly in *Elsah History* newsletters.

HEF formed an ad hoc committee to develop

recommendations on standards for HEF digital records and photographs. Digitizing records and even moving already digital records requires standards, resources, skills and time. All issues of *Elsah History* and other HEF publications have been scanned and made available to the public on Archive.com. HEF is grateful that CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois) awarded the Marshall Brooks Library of Principia College this scanning project. HEF publications are now reaching a new audience with this easy access.

CL: What do you see ahead for Elsau and its historic preservation efforts?

JP: As I look at the future of Elsau, I'm greatly concerned about the impact of increased flooding. Farley Music Hall is in the floodway. Elsau buildings have been demolished due to flooding in the past and even more recently. For example, on the Elsau riverfront there was a large brick building (in front of Riverview House). It served as a railroad depot, office and



Odd Fellow's Hall building on right. c. 1900. Courtesy of Principia Archives.

meeting room. It is called Odd Fellows' Hall in the Guidebook. That building was razed in 1951, after a boat ran into the building during a major flood. Riverview House itself has been flooded in 1973, 1993 and 2019!

CL: Do you see any answers to the threat of increasing severity of floods in Elsie?

JP: The most effective flood protection is to be out of the way of floods.

I believe that HEF should explore in detail the possibility of moving Farley Music Hall. Moving the building would require the purchase of a new lot. HEF pays \$7,000-8,000 a year in flood insurance. If HEF obtained a mortgage to help defray the costs of moving or elevating, the money that currently goes to flood insurance could be redirected to mortgage payments.

CL: What makes historic Elsie special, in your view?

JP: Our little square of the world is small --



maybe that's the interest of Elsie. Even though we are just a tiny village with vernacular architecture in the valley, inhabited over the years by very ordinary people (and sometimes extraordinary people), we're really

a microcosm of what happens to communities over time. We may be more aware of the past and its lessons. That's our asset and, unfortunately, being a small community with limited resources is challenging.

Hosmer Student's Career in Historic Preservation

"... [I] have made a career in historic preservation. It was Professor Dr. Charles Hosmer (C'53) who deepened my interest in this field. I took his American Architecture course, and he signed my application to Columbia University for graduate school where I received a master's degree in historic preservation. His course laid the foundation for the work I do now, and I take some pride that I had such a distinguished introduction to historic preservation, with Dr. Hosmer as my first professor of American buildings.

I am currently assisting a Native American tribe in the Midwest in preserving a cultural resource meaningful to them. I was able to recommend Dr. Hosmer's book that chronicles the development of historic preservation in the United States to these clients and my staff. It was satisfying to mention that the author of this seminal work was my former professor..."

Excerpt from "From Carpenter's Apprentice to Architectural Conservator" by David Wessel (C'78) in the Winter 2022 issue of The Principia Purpose. David is currently principal at Architectural Resources Group and CEO of ARG Conservation Services in San Francisco. Used by permission.

Presidents of HEF

1971-93 – Charles B. Hosmer, Jr.
1993-98 – Inge Mack
1999-2002 – John Williams
2003-2010 – Marie Oleson
2011-18 – Tim Tomlinson
2019 Vacant
2020 - present – Donna DeWeese

“Dinky” Replica Dedicated

The Edward Amburg History Museum and Visitors Center in Grafton held a dedication ceremony June 8, 2022, for the newly completed replica of the Dinky, the bus that ran on rails between Alton and Grafton before the River Road was built. The Dinky transported Principia College students and Grafton Powder Mill workers, among others, besides bearing the hefty responsibility of moving the mail.



Former frequent rider Butch Rister, present at the ceremony, described the fun of spending Saturdays in Alton at the YMCA and Grand Theater, using the Dinky to get there. An Elsah resident, Dewey McDowell, was its first driver.

In the early 1900s, most land travel was done by steam engine. The line to Grafton, requiring four employees, proved to be unprofitable and was terminated. In response, the Illinois Terminal Railroad Company decided to move to a unique mode of transportation: the railbus. Over the course of two decades, three different railbuses served this route: Illinois Terminal Railbuses #204 and #205 ran concurrently from 1933 to 1939. Railbus #206, running from 1939 to 1953, is the last and sole survivor of the trio. Railbus #206 was nicknamed “the Dinky” by Principia College students because it seated so few folks,

according to the National Museum of Transportation, where it is on display. The railbuses held 29-30 passengers. Students from Principia even wrote songs and poems about the Dinky.

Ben Allen, owner of the Loading Dock restaurant in Grafton, conceived and led the Dinky replica project. He took on the challenge of finding a bus model matching the original and parts needed to complete it. This took him as far afield as Montana and California.

Sourced from St. Louis Post Dispatch and Jersey Country Journal. Principia research by Colleen Turkal.

A Principia student’s take on the Dinky

"A popular time to ride the dinky has been on Saturdays. A quick run down the back road to Elsah around 8:20 gave one just enough time to catch the "bus" as it rumbled into Elsah at 8:33. It was boarded at the quaint little shack on the river's edge. After a couple of jolts and bumps, the "dink" creaked out of Elsah, across the little bridge and, gaining momentum, started the last part of its journey toward Alton. Balancing precariously close to the river's edge at times, it slipped along past a couple of old deserted showboats and numerous little fishing shanties. After a couple of stops at Clifton Terrace and Rock Haven, where the driver leaped out and placed the little old metal stool on the ground for passengers, the "dinky" breezed into Alton not quite half an hour after leaving Elsah." *Principia Pilot* article by Pat Shaw in 1953 (volume X, no. 25, p. 3).

Native Plant and Wetland Restoration in Elsah

By Michael Rhaesa

Historic Elsah Foundation recently added the natural environment as one of its targets for preservation (See Purpose Statement p. 16). In that spirit we offer this report on the concept, development and current state of wetland restoration in the Village of Elsah.

The creek that runs through the Village of Elsah is fed by several springs emerging from small bluffs that frame a mile long hollow; the Village resides within this hollow. As the creek flows through the center of the hollow, the ground beside the creek slopes steeply upwards on either side to the top of short bluffs. The Village lies predominantly on the west side of the creek and contaminants flow from the Village downhill during rain events. The village water enters the creek and from there flows into the Mississippi River a short distance away. Many in Elsah are committed to keeping the village historic and authentic. Some of the villagers reasoned, if the Village is historic, shouldn't the plants in the village be historic as well? Shouldn't we plant native plants in wetlands and terrestrial gardens and create an even more authentic village? And won't the Village be more beautiful with flowering plants, shrubs and native trees? The idea was born, and the Village set about to restore its flora to something that might have been seen in the 1800's.

From problem to solution

The first modern day wetlands began when the village tractor got stuck in a constantly marshy area. Unable to mow this area, some in the Village decided to construct a low dam to trap



Mike Rhaesa and Mike Pitchford working on the new wetland bog, 2022.

even more water in this marsh and establish water loving plants there. This area is approximately a hundred feet by a hundred feet. Arrowheads (*Sagittaria latifolia*) and button bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) grew in this proposed wetland naturally. So the villagers added other plants, mass planting to avoid aggressive competition. *Boltonia decurrens*, sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*), thin leafed arrowhead (*Sagittaria graminea*), broad fruited bur reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepius incarnata*), blue flag (*Iris versicolor*), cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), blue lobelia (*siphilitica*), pickeral weed (*Pontedaria cordata*) and lizard's tail (*Saururus*

cernuus) joined the naturally growing arrowheads and buttonbush. For a year the wetland flourished and bloomed and reproduced until two separate problems occurred, -- muskrats and floods.

Muskrats alter Village goals

Muskrats dug tunnels through the wetlands, causing the wetland water to empty into the creek. Muskrats ate large swaths of aquatic vegetation and made their home there. Once the water was gone, however, so were the muskrats; the research says muskrats stay in water as predator defense. Once the villagers gave up the idea of constantly keeping the aquatic plants in water and shifted to a moist soil regime, the muskrat problem dissolved.

This wetland borders the creek. The soil is sand, silt and creek gravel and so does not hold water for more than several days. But it does hold water from rain events long enough to satisfy the needs of the wetland plants and also eliminates the life cycle of mosquitoes. It turned out to be good public relations to assure the villagers that the wetlands were not breeding mosquitoes. And so there was a shift in thinking by those attempting to expand the wetlands. This need to eliminate mosquitoes and deter muskrats outweighed the desire to keep a constant water level in the wetlands. There was a shift from a wetlands concept to a moist soil or rain garden concept for the rest of the Village. During the summer when the rain gardens go dry these rain gardens are supplemented with creek water pumped from the creek by the village trash pump.

Navigating Mississippi floods

The Mississippi River did not flood the first year of the project, but it did the second year. When the river flooded, water backed up into

the Village. Low land near the river sunk underwater. Water rose and the wetlands lay dark beneath eight to ten feet of turbid water. This flood lasted for weeks, and when it finally receded, many of the plants had perished.

Whether due to lack of sunlight or grass carp predation, several species were completely absent from the wetlands. *Boltonia decurrens*, swamp milkweed, blue flag, and pickerel weed succumbed to the flood. Sweet flags, arrowheads, bur reeds, and buttonbush survived but in fewer numbers and appeared less robust. The surviving plants reproduced from rhizomes and seeds. New plants had to be added to increase diversity that year.

Because this wetlands is at one of the lowest elevations, very near the river, and because the river tended to flood at least once a year, the wetlands needed more frequent plantings to keep diversity at a higher level. Had the Village been satisfied with three or four species, the wetland would be self-sustaining. But monarch butterflies migrate every year and milkweeds should be available. In addition, visitors touring the wetlands should be able to view numerous flowering plants in a variety of colors. Without an abundance of beauty, few have much interest in wetlands.

Cleaner water for Village

Now water flows downhill from the village into rain gardens and wetlands that overflow into the creek. Plants take up contaminants through their roots and disperse them throughout their leaves and stems. By taking contaminants from the water, water is less contaminated when processed by wetlands. Wetlands and rain gardens perform this ecosystem service. A student from nearby Principia College quantified this process in Elsah's wetlands and concluded that water entering the wetlands held

more contaminants than water leaving the wetlands. Thus the creek was cleaner and, to an extent, the water flowing into the Mississippi River was cleaner. ("Fecal indicator bacteria in a surface flow constructed wetland in south-western Illinois," USA Wetlands, Vanessa L. Waller, Gregory L. Bruland). The value of cleaner water to the health and aesthetics of human beings and all life cannot be overstated.

Greater life in the creek

Elsah's wetlands is now eight to nine years old. Several more rain gardens have since been added and septic tanks repaired. Improvements to the health of the creek since its implementation are obvious.

The creek is home to amphipods (*Gammarus pseudolimnaeus* and assorted isopods and aquatic worms. Banded sculpins once lived only in small pools where water flowed directly from several springs in the creek. Banded sculpins are intolerant of pollution. As such, they are a high quality indicator fish; their increased range and population point to an increase in the quality of the creek water. Since the improvements, sculpins have multiplied and moved through the entire length of the creek. In addition, large schools of central stonerollers traverse the creek with green sunfish and madtoms.

Many pollinators visit the blooming flowers in Elsah, and salamanders burrow beneath logs that lie on the wet soil, as seen by researchers at Principia College. This area borders climax forests where the College conducts research on endangered timber rattlers. Pileated woodpeckers soar through these woods and bald eagles feed on the fish in the river nearby.

A feeling of community

A mulch walking trail, perhaps an eighth of a

mile long, was added along the creek, past three wetland areas. Since its inception, many villagers and tourists have walked this trail. Water loving trees were purchased with money from a grant from Illinois Water, predominantly bald cypress, river birch, water loving dogwoods, and buttonbush. These were planted the length of the trail by numerous volunteers and are but part of the beauty of this lovely walk. At the end of the walk, strollers can cross to another sidewalk trail behind Farley's Music Hall and across from the Methodist and Christian Science churches. Here the creek curves and meanders and, though above potential floods from the Mississippi, the creek is very flashy and sometimes catastrophic. Rip-rap consisting of large stones was added where the bank washed out.

With grant money the Village purchased hundreds of plants from Forest Keeling Nursery, and volunteers landscaped the banks for erosion control and beautification. They created a more formal terrestrial garden across from one church in a particularly unsightly area; it is now a stunning garden where one may sit and meditate. Amsonia, joe pye weed, and numerous cone flowers and sunflowers grow robustly in this show garden.

Latest project: a rain garden

In the Village's latest project, they constructed a large rain garden and planted water-loving plants above the level of the severity of the floods from the Mississippi. From the original wetlands, near the river, the ground rises gradually uphill as one travels upstream. With the village tractor they first dug an area perhaps sixty feet by twenty feet and approximately twelve inches deep parallel to the creek. This rain garden is at the bottom of the watershed just before the land sloping down into the creek; the area fills after a good rain and



empties after a day. Hundreds of additional native plants were purchased from Forest Keeling Nursery with Illinois Water grant money. As many as ten volunteers,

led by their leaders, Mayor Mike Pitchford and Trustee Patti Sontag, Public Works Committee chair, showed up with shovels and resolve. In this rain garden, volunteers planted soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), path rush (*Juncus tenuis*), blue flag (iris *versicolor*), copper iris, and dogwoods (*Cornus*). The plants were dug in and mulched with leaf litter previously stored by the village. Also, in the more shaded areas along the trail they're establishing colonies of pink turtleheads and white turtleheads, as well as assorted joe pye weeds and other more shade tolerant plants. *Boltonia decurrens* are now well established along the creek banks and surprisingly seem to do well in the shade.

The establishment of turtleheads and *Boltonia* is important because they are both very rare. *Boltonia* is federally threatened. *Boltonia decurrens* existed only in Missouri and Illinois, along the big river systems, and was abundant at the founding of Elsah in 1853. Turtleheads are also very rare and their establishment is that much more insurance against their extinction. More common plants that sustain the monarch butterfly and other pollinators, especially swamp milkweed, are planted in numerous home gardens as well as the rain gardens. Many in the village feel that the more they plant native primary producing plants, the greater the benefit

to native vertebrates and invertebrates. For many it has become a life-long mission. Since beginning these projects, camaraderie has developed between many of the volunteers; when asked they expressed a sense of belonging to the Village. After investing their time and sweat, they walk the mulch path and feel part of a community that grows slightly more beautiful every day. In addition, they know that what they see as beautiful also filters the air, soil, and water.

Larger habitat and solar pump

This year, the habitat size of the wetlands has doubled in comparison to last year's. The focus has been on more uncommon milkweeds for monarch butterflies.

These include poke, white swamp and

spider milkweeds. In addition, the Village is in the process of installing its first solar array to power its first solar pump in the new wetlands. Although residents feel as if any number of projects have been completed, this has only led to visions of grander and more beautiful projects for the future.



Michael Rhaesa's interest in local wetland ecology was sparked by a class at Principia College. He went on to earn an M.S. degree in Biology from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Since moving to Elsah in 2008, he has taken a hands-on approach to applying his expertise on behalf of the Village's ecological well-being.

Elsah Cemetery Honors Veterans with Dedicated Memorial

By Colleen Turkal

If you've visited the Elsah cemetery recently, you may have noticed the beautiful new memorial listing the names of veterans buried there. Local artist Merrilyn Shoemaker designed the set of three stone monuments, which was erected May 27th, 2021, with the support and funding of Elsah Township over a period of several years.

In her 2017 proposal of the design to the township's board, Shoemaker explained how the project came about: when sisters Janet Laubscher and Betty Clark discovered the resting place of their own great grandfather and Civil War veteran Arthur Bryant here in Elsah Cemetery, they began researching the history of the cemetery and the people buried there. With the generous support of the Jersey County Historical Society, they uncovered which veterans had been buried there and started the process of restoring the graves. As Shoemaker noted, "All this love the Bryant sisters had for their family history grew into a community project" and the rest is, well, history.

The Elsah cemetery has been the final resting place of veterans dating as far back as the Civil War. Historian and local journalist John J. Dunphy explains that both Union and Confederate soldiers were buried in Elsah cemetery, as well as veterans from the Spanish-American War.

Historian and local journalist John J. Dunphy explains that both Union and Confederate soldiers were buried in Elsah cemetery, as well as veterans from the Spanish-American War. He also notes that Civil War veterans' graves have a few uniform traits.

VILLAGE NEWS History in the making

2020 Census count for Elsah

Based on the 2020 Decennial Census taken April 1 of the same year, the Village of Elsah has 519 inhabitants, as certified by Illinois State Secretary Jesse White. This is a lower figure than the 2010 count of 673.



Hummingbird Banding in Elsah

Representatives from the Lincoln Land Association of Bird Banders, Vernon and Betty Kleen, will again capture and band hummingbirds in Elsah on July 9, to obtain migration and population data.

***ConnectElsah* seeks stronger broadband**

Elsah was chosen as one of six Illinois municipalities to be part of the "Accelerate Illinois Broadband Infrastructure Planning Program." Ten residents participated in a 42-hour online course. Their first action step was to conduct a survey on the current state of internet service in the area. The data collected was used to generate a map version. The 2,500 survey forms they distributed door to door and online in

Elsah and surrounding communities brought in 207 responses. They are currently meeting with various broadband providers and were able to obtain internet service for the remaining house in the Village that had been deemed too far out.



Digital access to photos of Elsay past

In January, the Principia Archives announced the availability of its newly digitized “Historic Elsay Photograph Collection” as part of the Principia Digital Collections website. This collection provides easy access to this wealth of historical photos, and will grow a little bit more over the new year. Visit the website often to discover updates of this collection:
<https://principia.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/>

Ukraine potluck and fundraiser

Some 30 residents gathered at the Civic Center April 9 to share and taste Ukrainian cuisine, including piogis, cabbage and meat casserole, pyrizhky (strawberry mini-pies) and babka. Elsay business Peace Works donated the painting “Peace to Ukraine” by local artist Ellen Connoyer Case for auction. Donations collected were sent to Global Giving Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund and World Central Kitchen.

HEF NEWS

Elsah Museum reopens for season

Located at 26 LaSalle St., the museum is free (donations always appreciated!) and open every Saturday and Sunday, 1:00 to 4:00 pm, April through November. Artifacts, photos, and information bring to light Elsay’s rich history. There are volunteer attendants to answer questions. This year, Elsay resident Steve Brown joins Sally Horbelt and Jeff DePew as a regular attendant, and Jennifer Erb as a substitute.

We warmly welcome Jody Jedicka as a new member of the Museum Committee. She will be handling the annual Photo Exhibit. We are looking for more people to help with installing exhibits, photography and art. Please contact Donna DeWeese, historicselsah@gmail.com.





"Welcome to Elsah" by Patricia Ott, 2022.

Photography Exhibit winners

Elsah's 2022 Photography Exhibit attracted a number of entries this year, both amateur and professional. The exhibit opened in the Village Museum on April 2, followed by a reception to announce the 2022 winners. The purpose of the Photography Exhibit is to foster an appreciation of Elsah through the photographic expression of the contest theme, which was Elsah Postcard this year.

The winner of the 2022 Purchase Prize was "Welcome to Elsah" by photographer Patricia Ott of Godfrey, IL. Four other recognitions for photographs with outstanding qualities were awarded to Joan Baker, Tim Eckels, Karen King, and Jeff Vaughn. For the fourth year, a Youth Award was given for the best photograph submitted by a person between 10 and 18 years of age. The winning photograph was "Elsah Village Hall" by Penny Hosmer of Godfrey, Illinois.

Three Hosmer-Williams Lectures held

April 28, 2022 - Author, artist, and storyteller Janet Riehl presented "The Stories that Shaped Us", based on the experiences of six generations of her family living atop the bluffs of the



Mississippi River in Jersey County. It was a treat to hear her play music of the time on her fiddle!



March 3, 2022 - Local historian J. Eric Robinson lectured live at Farley's (with an online option) on "Discovering the Underground Railroad." A long-time expert on the topic, Mr. Robinson engaged the audience with the "why's" of the network that helped slaves cross the line to freedom, as well as fascinating details about its operation and influence in our area.

Nov. 12, 2021 - "Rediscovering Lincoln's Bible: A Gift from the Ladies of Philadelphia Volunteer Hospital Association" was the topic of a lecture delivered via webinar by Ian Patrick Hunt of the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois.

The Hosmer-Williams Lecture Series, hosted by Historic Elsah Foundation and underwritten by Liberty Bank, is free and open to the public.

Keep an eye on **historicelsah.org** for information about upcoming lectures!

Farley Music Hall

An event rental venue

Constructed by Benjamin Farley in 1885, this hall quickly became the center of village activity in Elsah's early days. Its purpose continues today.

This beautiful, restored space is available to rent for occasions such as weddings, dances, receptions, birthday parties, company meetings and lectures.



Kitchen facilities, folding chairs and a green space on the north side of the building are assets previous renters of the venue have appreciated.

The rental fee is \$200 per day, and HEF members receive a 25% discount. To reserve, make an email request at historicelsah@gmail.com.



HEF Purpose Statement

The purposes of the Historic Elsay Foundation are:

- to preserve and enhance the historic buildings, houses, architecture, culture and natural environment of the Village of Elsay, Illinois;
- to encourage historical research and publication of materials on the Village and nearby historic areas;
- to foster educational programs for the general public on the history of the Village and the larger region.

Historic Elsay Foundation Board 2022

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Memberships for 2022

Student	\$25
Supporter	\$50
Patron	\$100
Founder's Circle	\$250
Benefactor	\$1000
Small Business Associate	\$100
Corporate Sponsorship	\$1000

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Contact & further information

Mail: HEF, P.O. Box 117, Elsay, IL 62028

Email: historicelsah@gmail.com

Website: <http://historicelsah.com>

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